



Appropriation Committee Public Hearing on the DSS Budget 2/16/17

Testimony from Julianne Gousse

LifeBridge Community Services

PLEASE DO NOT SHRED THE SAFETY NET

Good evening honorable members of the Appropriation Committee. I am Julianne Gousse, the Clinician for the SAFETY NET Program, from LifeBridge Community Services in Bridgeport. Safety Net is a state-wide program that supports families facing barriers to self-sufficiency. We provide intensive, solution-focused case management services and care coordination that identify and reduce barriers to sustained employment. Services are home and community-based and are provided on a schedule and format that best needs the needs of clients. We approach families through a "whatever it takes" style, helping families address their challenges so that they can find hope for employment and ultimately a bright future for them and their children.

My job is to go on the home visits with the Case Manager or alone to assess a family's needs and provide brief intervention and referrals. Once the families score a Level 3 on the Assessment; it is a warning bell that signals the family is either facing Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence, or Mental Health issues. The Safety Net program help families facing poverty to address their barriers to employment and self-sufficiency. We are the Net that catches the families and bring them to safety. The Safety Net program exist for the families who have exhausted their state benefits and are at risk of being homeless, losing their heat and hot water, their cooking gas.

Last year we served 3,200 families through Safety Net Services. I am here on behalf on my families to **urge you to fully fund the Safety Net Services program, funded through the Safety Net and Community Services lines in the DSS budget. This is a core program to support families facing the many challenges of poverty so that they can remove obstacles to employment and become self-sufficient.** The Governor's budget eliminates these lines and consolidates funding from the Safety Net and Community Services lines to the Human Service Infrastructure line, which is then reduced in total by 20%. _ This program is vital to the health, safety and security of thousands of families. A 20% reduction in services could mean that 600 families will not have access to these vital services. Many of the families we help through Safety Net have submitted testimony today sharing their stories about how the program has changed their lives. I am sad to think about the many families who would not have Safety Net as a resource if funding is cut by 20%

I urge you to protect Safety Net Services.